

■ **INSTRUCTION:** Coroner lays out extent of panel's responsibilities

No-one is on trial, inquest jury is warned

by **Chris Owen**
Chief reporter

JURORS have been told they cannot point the finger of blame at any individual when they reach their verdicts on 10 deaths of elderly patients in a Gosport hospital.

Coroner Andrew Bradley told them they were not concerned with finding anybody liable for the deaths at the War Memorial Hospital.

Summing up on the 18th day of the unprecedented inquests at Portsmouth Crown Court, Mr Bradley said the five women and three men on the jury would have to consider each case individually before returning verdicts simultaneously on all 10.

He told them they were 'the fact-finders' at the conclusion of the hearings which started on March 18.

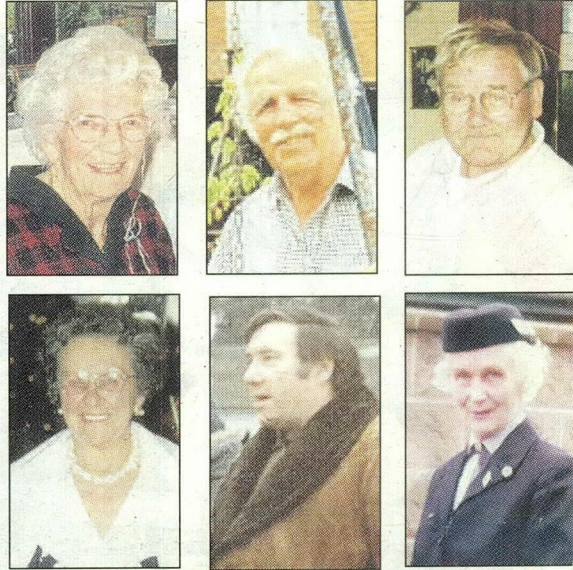
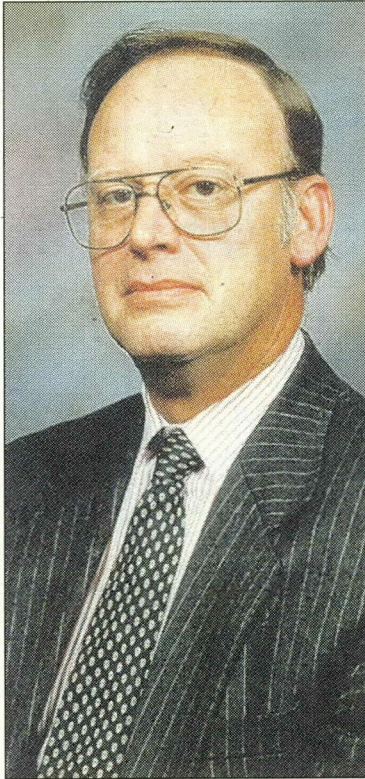
Mr Bradley said their job was to establish from all the evidence they have heard how each patient died and not who, if anyone, might have been responsible.

Gosport GP Jane Barton has featured in each of the 10 cases and her prescribing regime of strong painkilling drugs has been examined in minute detail.

Mr Bradley warned the jurors that no one was on trial in an inquest.

He said: 'This is not a trial of anybody, least of all Dr Barton. You cannot, in any way, deal with liability.'

The coroner then spent the rest of yesterday reminding the jury of all the evidence



Coroner Andrew Bradley, left, has told jurors they cannot blame any individual for the deaths at the War Memorial Hospital. The jury was today sent out to consider its verdicts into the death of 10 patients, including, clockwise from top left, Ruby Lake, Brian Cunningham, Robert Wilson, Enid Spurgeon, Mick Packman, Elsie Devine



CRITICAL QUESTIONS

■ When coroner Andrew Bradley asked the jury to retire today he was asking them to consider three questions on each of the 10 deaths.

The first question they had to consider was: did the administration of any medication contribute, even minimally, to the death of the deceased?

If they decided the answer to that question

was 'yes', they had to move to the second question which asked: was that medication given for therapeutic purposes?

Again if the jurors decided the answer to that was 'yes' they were going to the third question which asked: was it [the medication] appropriate for the condition from which the deceased was suffering?

concerning each of the 10 patients - all of whom died on Dryad ward at the War Memorial between 1996 and 1999.

He told them that when

they retired to consider their verdicts they would have access to all records - including each patient's medical records and those of the War Memorial Hospital and of the

hospital from which they were transferred.

Throughout the inquests not only has Dr Barton come under scrutiny, but also the actions of various nurses who were allowed to administer her prescriptions.

The hearings are examining the deaths of 82-year-old Leslie Pittock; Elsie Lavender, 83; Helena Service 99; Ruby Lake, 84; Arthur - known as Brian - Cunningham, 79; Robert Wilson, 74; Enid Spurgeon, 92; Geoffrey - known as Mick - Packman, 68; Elsie Devine, 88, and Sheila Gregory, 91.

The jury was expected to be sent out today.

(Proceeding)

chris.owen@thenews.co.uk

Heroin was found in body of river tragedy man

TEENAGERS have been warned: you're stupid if you do drugs.

That's the message from Kay Robbins whose brother Guy Thomas Scott was found dead in the River Lavant in December after a day spent doing drugs.

Mr Scott had been a drug addict for more than 20 years, an inquest at Chichester Magistrates' Court heard.

Mr Scott had just moved into a flat in Lennox Road, Chichester, and was on the path to get his life sorted out again, his sister said.

But on December 16 he travelled to London with a friend to score some drugs, returning home sometime that evening.

The 42-year-old had a phone call from a friend after midnight asking if he wanted to stay at his home in Caernarvon Road, but nobody heard from Mr Scott after that.

His body was found in the River Lavant in St Pancras on the morning of December 17.

A post-mortem examination found he had traces of heroin in his body.

Mrs Robbins said: 'People that get involved are really stupid.'

'I remember him as an addict and I used to describe him as low-life scum, but he was my brother, he was the good looking, intelligent, lovable family-orientated person and that's the person I choose to

remember.'

West Sussex deputy coroner Dr David Skipp recorded a verdict of accidental death.

He said: 'He was found in that river and because of the temperature he became hypothermic.'

'Because of the drugs that we found in his blood stream, I think he probably could not get out of the river when he was in it.'

'Whether he was pushed or not, I cannot answer that question.'

'I think it is a tragedy that a young man should end up like that on his own in a river because of the lifestyle that he had chosen.'

ju
L
E
n
of

he
gr
m
fa
Fr

h
tr
st

at
th
ed
e

k
n
w
o
fo

w

li